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A NEW DEPARTURE IN MEDICAL TREATMENT.

VERY little is to be found in most works on medicine with regard to that structure in the neck called the thyroid gland, except that its enlargement constitutes the familiar disease called goitre, and that the strange condition called cretinism is in some way related to goitre. Till recently, the function of this organ was quite unknown. But within the last few years, certain obscure forms of disease have been shown to be closely related to the thyroid gland, and the work done in connection with them has led to such a remarkable new departure in their treatment, and to so substantial an advance in scientific knowledge with regard to this organ, that a short account of the present position of the subject, and the steps by which it has been attained, may not prove uninteresting.

The thyroid gland in man is situated in the neck, a little below 'Adam's apple,' which marks the top of the windpipe. It is of a deep-red colour, and is so freely supplied with blood, that its arteries are together just about as large as those which pass to the whole of the brain.

The disease called goitre, which is due to an enlargement of this gland, is very frequently found in various mountainous districts, such as the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Himalayas, &c.; and though not common in Britain, it is found in Derbyshire occasionally, and is there known as the 'Derbyshire Neck.' The other disease mentioned—cretinism—is found in the same mountainous districts above mentioned, and the name is derived from 'cretin,' which is applied to a certain dwarfed, thick-skinned class of human beings found in the Alpine valleys. They have broad faces, thickened features, thick coarse hair, and a wrinkled shrivelled skin, which gives them the appearance of old age. Their mental development, like their bodies, is dwarfed and stunted, but not to the same degree in all cases. Similar individuals are occasionally, but very rarely, met

with in this country, and are known as sporadic cretins.

In 1873 Sir W. Gull read a paper on what he called a Cretinoid State supervening in Adult Life in Women. In 1877 Dr Ord more fully described the same disease, and proposed for it the name, now universally adopted, of Myxoëdema. This disease is rare, but presents such distinctive features that a well-marked case is quite unmistakable. It generally comes on during middle life, and affects women much more frequently than men. Superficially, it presents but little resemblance to cretinism; the stunted growth and shrivelled skin are conspicuous by their absence; and it is not a little remarkable that Sir W. Gull should so long ago have divined the close relationship of the two diseases. The face is much swollen and broad; the features heavy and expressionless; the hair coarse and scanty; the hands thick and clumsy; the skin everywhere thickened, scaly, and destitute of perspiration; the whole body enlarged, heavy, and awkward. The mental features of the disease are equally characteristic; the perceptions are dulled, speech and movements slow, and there is a great loss of energy and of ability for exertion. The bodily temperature is much reduced, and the patients are very easily influenced by cold, and always worse during cold weather. At the first glance, the disease might be mistaken for a form of dropsy; but the swelling is felt to be firm, and does not retain the impression of the fingers, as in that case it would. In one of Dr Ord's cases, where a post-mortem examination was performed, the swollen skin was found to contain a much larger quantity of mucin than is normally present; in consequence of which he gave the name Myxoëdema, or mucous swelling. He observed, moreover, that the thyroid gland was in a state of degeneration.

A number of cases were soon reported by other observers, so that no doubt could be entertained that this was a distinct and hitherto unrecognised disease. Some cases were benefited by treatment to a certain extent; but on the whole, till 1891,

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Myxoedema, though very slow in its progress, had proved one of the most intractable and hopeless of diseases.

Meantime, however, light had been thrown upon the meaning of the disease from an unexpected quarter. In many of the valleys of Switzerland, visitors cannot have failed to observe that a large proportion of the population have swellings on the front of the neck, some of them of a very large size. This is goitre. In the great majority of cases, these goitres produce no deleterious effect upon the health, and no inconvenience, except from their size. In some districts, indeed, they are regarded as decidedly ornamental. Occasionally, however, they cause pressure upon the windpipe, and threaten to stop the passage of air through it altogether; and it is on this account that their removal has usually been performed.

In Switzerland, therefore, where goitre is common, it was natural that relief from its occasional discomforts and dangers should most often be sought; and it was there, accordingly, that surgeons had most experience of its removal. In 1882-83, Reverdin and Kocher, two Swiss surgeons, described a peculiar train of symptoms which had come on some time after complete removal of the thyroid gland in some of their patients. These symptoms were lassitude, loss of activity, slowness of thought, speech, and movement, thickening of the features, and general swelling of the body. Their descriptions were published in ignorance of the accounts of Myxoedema which had been given in this country. The singular correspondence between the two conditions was not long in being noticed; and when it was first pointed out in this country by Dr. Felix Semon, at the Clinical Society of London in 1883, it was regarded as of such importance that a Committee of the Society was appointed to make inquiry into the whole subject. The results of its elaborate investigations were published in a substantial volume in 1888.

In connection with the work of this Committee, Professor Victor Horsley undertook a series of experiments on animals, in which he obtained very remarkable results. He confirmed the observations of others who had found that dogs die very soon after removal of the thyroid gland with muscular tremors and other symptoms, due to disturbance of the nervous system. But in monkeys he showed that the operation is longer survived, and that the symptoms found—lowering of temperature, thickening of features, loss of hair, &c.—closely correspond to those seen in man both after removal of the thyroid gland and in the spontaneous disease called Myxoedema. It was these experiments which first definitely warranted the conclusion that the cause of the symptoms of Myxoedema is loss of function of the thyroid gland.

Experiments had also been made in another

direction which led to still more important results. Continental observers had shown that if thyroid glands be removed from healthy dogs, and implanted in the body of another dog, its own thyroid may afterwards be removed, in some cases without any bad result. In the cases where this happened, it was found that one at least of the transplanted thyroids had, so to speak, taken root, and was growing in its new situation; but the operation may fail in spite of very great care in its performance, and this result is not always attained.

In 1889, a patient suffering from the effects of removal of the thyroid gland had a sheep's thyroid transplanted into her tissues, and was temporarily benefited. In 1890, without having heard of this experiment, Professor Horsley suggested the same treatment for Myxoedema, and it has been adopted in a number of cases. Some relief usually results from the operation, but it is in most cases only transient. No doubt the difficulty of getting the gland to take root is much greater than in the case of the dog, because it cannot be taken from another individual of the same species.

One circumstance, however, was noticed and remarked upon by those who were watching the results of the operation. Improvement of the symptoms began *within twenty-four hours of its performance*. It was clearly impossible that the gland should have taken root and become active so soon: to what could this rapid improvement be attributed? Might it not be that the juice present in the gland at the time of its implantation was absorbed into the blood of the patient, and so produced this surprising effect?

Reasoning upon this observation, Dr G. R. Murray of Newcastle conceived the happy idea of extracting the juice from the thyroid gland of a sheep and injecting it through a fine hollow needle into the tissues of the patient. The first case in which he adopted this treatment proved a signal success; and an account of it, published towards the close of 1891, attracted general attention. Many other cases have since been treated in this way, and almost all with more or less benefit.

But the disadvantages of this method are considerable. The preparation of the extract from the gland requires very great care; the injection of it needs always to be performed by a practised hand; and in spite of every precaution, abscesses sometimes result from the injections. Last year, accordingly, several medical men independently tried the effect of administering the gland or its extract by the mouth; and it was found that this simple method produced just as good results as the more complicated one.

The results obtained have been very surprising. In almost all cases some improvement has resulted. Some have lost four stones in weight, and become active and lively instead of dull and apathetic. Some who were almost bald have grown a new, thick crop of hair. Some who had for years been incapacitated for work have been able to resume their occupations. One patient was so changed in appearance that her own daughter failed to recognise her, when she went into the hospital ward where she was under treatment, to see her after a few weeks' interval.

The treatment has also been applied to some

cases of sporadic cretinism in this country, with, if possible, still more astonishing effects. The children's apathy diminishes, their expression becomes intelligent, and they begin to take an interest in things about them, and to play as they never did before; their bodily growth, which had been almost arrested perhaps for a long period, takes a sudden start, and they may increase in height at the rate of an inch a month, instead of perhaps hardly as much in a year.

The improvement lasts only so long as the patients continue to take the remedy; a few weeks' cessation is generally sufficient to show that the old condition would speedily return. But it is little hardship to have to continue to take a small powder, or a few drops of liquid, or even a little morsel of raw meat, every few days during the rest of their lives. Time only can show whether it is possible by this means fully to maintain the benefit obtained at first; but there is every reason to expect that it will be so.

These results have not been obtained without some failures and mistakes. It was but natural, considering the contempt with which the thyroid gland has generally been regarded, that it should be administered at first by some of those who tried it in what we now know to be far too large doses; and in some cases these produced unpleasant and even alarming effects. Such mistakes should be easily avoided in future; and there seems no doubt that in this method of treating Myxœdema we have one of the safest, most certain, and most satisfactory of our means of dealing with disease.

We have advanced considerably, too, in our knowledge of the function of the thyroid gland. We know not only that it is necessary to the health of the body, but that it acts by elaborating and supplying to the blood some substance or substances without which it cannot properly nourish the tissues. What the nature of these substances is remains to be discovered. They must be identical or very closely analogous in man and the sheep, pig, and ox; for the thyroids of all these animals have been found to supply equally well what is wanting in patients whose thyroids have lost their activity.

We do not yet know, but shall doubtless soon learn, what is the effect of administering thyroid gland in considerable doses to healthy individuals. Some experiments have already been made in its use in other forms of disease than those known to depend on loss of function of the thyroid gland; but it is too soon yet to be able to pronounce on their value, though they are such as to suggest great possibilities of future usefulness.

There can be very little doubt that an organ of such importance as the thyroid is now known to be, must be subject to disturbances of a lesser degree than the almost complete loss of function which leads to the symptoms of Myxœdema, and that these disturbances must lead to disorders of the general health. Such disorders, if they exist, are at present quite unknown; and it must be one of the tasks of the future to unravel their symptoms, and to separate them from other forms of disease; when this is done, it will no doubt be found that here too the thyroid treatment has a large field of usefulness.

But this new treatment has possibilities of expansion in other directions. May it not be that other organs in the body have actions analogous to the thyroid, and that when their activity is deficient, the want may be supplied by the administration of extracts of the corresponding organs from the lower animals? This has already been done to some extent with regard to the digestive juices; how much farther it may be possible to extend the method, if at all, is at present quite uncertain. There is no doubt that the vista opened up by this new departure will not be fully explored for many years to come.

Meantime, the results of the thyroid treatment are sufficiently established to afford much cause for congratulation. More than a hundred individuals suffering from one of the most intractable and hopeless of diseases have been relieved, some after ten, fifteen, or even more years of distress. Some have merely had their condition alleviated; some have been practically cured, and restored to full vigour and activity.

How, then, has this result been brought about? First, undoubtedly, by the patient and painstaking investigation of obscure and apparently uninteresting forms of disease; but secondly, and no less certainly, by experimental investigations upon animals. Without these, it is doubtful whether we would yet have arrived at the definite conclusion that Myxœdema and sporadic cretinism are due to loss of function of the thyroid gland. Without these, we could never have discovered that the thyroid gland in animals plays a part so closely analogous to its function in man. Till this was known, who would have dared, even had the idea occurred to him, to attempt a transplantation from one of the lower animals to man? And even if this had been known, it is extremely doubtful if the experiment would ever have been tried in the human subject without previous proof of its feasibility and usefulness in the lower animals themselves.

THE BURDEN OF ISABEL.*

By J. MACLAREN COBBAN, Author of *Master of His Fate*; *A Soldier and a Gentleman*; &c.

CHAPTER XIX.—IN THE OPIUM DEN AGAIN.

ALAN AINSWORTH had not gone far in search of Mr Raynor—no farther, indeed, than two or three turnings beyond Isabel's lodgings—before he reflected that he had no exact information to guide him. Isabel had been able only to tell him that her father had gone, probably, to the opium den, which was in a horrible lane off the Ratcliff Highway; but he might, on the other hand, have gone somewhere with Doughty, since Doughty, too, was missing. Doughty, moreover, knew the way to the opium den; Ainsworth, therefore, concluded it better to seek Doughty first. He thought he knew where he might lay his hand on him; for that ancient and astute Bardolph of journalism had during their short acquaintance given him the privilege of several private and peculiar conversations, in which he had spoken

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of many of his lonely ways and shady haunts. From these conversations Ainsworth had gathered that Doughty, whenever he was depressed or in trouble, low in spirits or in pocket—both of which were conditions frequently recurrent—acted on Dr Johnson's saying: 'Let us take a walk down Fleet Street.' Ainsworth, therefore, took a hansom to Temple Bar, and walked down Fleet Street, looking in at several well-known houses of call by the way. At certain ancient and mouldy place of refreshment in a turning off the eastern end of the street, where many generations of roysterers and steady drinkers had heard 'the chimes at midnight' from the steeple close by, he found his man. Doughty sat with a crony in a remote corner of a long, low room, in which were a good many steady topers. Ainsworth was some little while beside them before they were aware of his presence. Doughty seemed in his most solemn and portentous mood.

'Francis,' he was saying, 'I could find it in me to do a big drink.'

'So could I, Alexander,' said the other; 'but how is it to be achieved?'

'I have it, Francis,' answered Doughty, after a moment's thought: 'by a tremendous pop!'

'Of what, Alexander?' demanded the other.

Ainsworth thought he had overheard enough, and tapped Doughty on the shoulder. Doughty turned, shook him by the hand in a manner most impressive and protracted, and invited him to sit down.

'I cannot stay,' said Ainsworth. 'I am on my way to find your chief, and I want you to help me.'

'I will help you, Mr Ainsworth,' said Doughty, 'when I have had a toothful of refreshment. Will you kindly call for a biscuit and something to help it down?'

'Did you know that your chief was gone off?' asked Ainsworth.

'Know? Does the jackal know when the lion is on the war-path? Most certainly I knew. It was the knowledge that drove me forth to wander like a maniac among the tombs. It was the thought of what his admirable and adorable daughter, Miss Raynor, might think of me that drove me thus far. This is not a fit place, Mr Ainsworth, in which to mention her noble Christian name; but I murmur it with infinite respect.' After a moment's pause, he continued: 'He eluded me. When he is bent on it, he can elude even me; and I have been with him for a countless number of years, and I have studied him, and I know him and his capacities through and through, and I venture to tell you, Mr Ainsworth, that the chief could write the whole *Encyclopaedia Britannica* himself if he liked!—

'And if he had the time,' added Ainsworth.

'—and if he had the time, solemnly repeated Doughty. 'But I do not stand in any awe of him. We have been like brothers for a countless number of years. It is of Miss Raynor I stand in awe; she makes me ashamed; she makes me think of Una and the lion (of course you are aware, Mr Ainsworth, that I am alluding to a

certain passage in Spenser, the poets' poet). How can I ever look her in the face again?'

He took off his hat, looked into it desperately, and sadly put it on again. The refreshment was brought, and Doughty at once made disappear the lighter part of it. The crony—who seemed to be to Doughty much what Souter Johnny was to Tam o' Shanter—then observed aside to Ainsworth that Doughty was wonderful: the more refreshment he took, the soberer and steadier he became! As if to prove that saying true, Doughty rose, breaking his biscuit, and declared to Ainsworth that he was ready; and forth they both marched.

Doughty was of solemn opinion that the chief would be in 'the thick' of his opium sleep, and that it might be as well to wait until he was likely to have had it out; but Ainsworth represented that he had promised Miss Raynor to find and bring home her father with all possible speed, and that she would be anxiously waiting for his return. Upon that Doughty acquiesced, and in his most portentous manner called a four-wheeler; and they rumbled and rattled away eastward through a region that was as yet little known to Ainsworth.

The cab was left, as on a former occasion, near the top of the noisome lane, and they went on foot, pursued by the curious looks of the policeman on 'fixed-point duty.' Doughty led the way on, and into the den, and Ainsworth followed with his attention at its utmost stretch; for this expedition was the most novel and romantic he had ever engaged on. The singular literary reputation of opium had hold of him, of course, but he was conscious of very little falling off in the realisation of what his fancy had expected: the sickly-sweet fumes of the opium were so peculiar to the sense, and all objects seen through the brown haze—swimming, writhing, and rolling—took such strange, soft, and distant shapes. He was startled by the sudden evolvement from the smoke—as if he were the genie of the place—of the grinning, slant-eyed Chinaman. He manifestly recognised Doughty, and knew his errand. He beckoned them, without a word, down the room, and pointed, with a bow, to a figure spread out on a mattress, with an opium pipe between the fingers: it was the chief. Ainsworth, on recognising him, at once stepped forward and shook him to wake him.

'No, no, no!' cried the Chinaman, frowning and gesticulating. 'Him muchee sleepie! No good!'

But the shake had a certain effect: the chief opened his eyes for an instant, and then took another position. He turned on his side with his knees drawn up and his head thrown back; he smiled and murmured:

Raynor of gold and jewels,
Raynor of silver and pearls;
Raynor of red,
Raynor of white,
Raynor of coral and ivory!'

And then he slid away again into complete silence and slumber. The words made an impression on Ainsworth. They haunted him ever after: they had such a musical cadence, that one was tempted to find them charged with meaning; and yet they were but nonsense, with the faintest possibility of sense: a bit of poetic dross touched with gold.

'You perceive,' said Doughty, 'that it is of no use attempting to get him away now. We must patiently wait. In the meantime we must see that he gets no more opium from Johnny Chinaman when he wakes; and I think I had better go and send the cab away: it will run into a great deal of money to keep it waiting.'

'I think, however,' said Ainsworth, 'it had better wait.'

'Then,' said Doughty, 'we had better give the cabman a trifle for refreshment. I have no change: can you oblige, Mr Ainsworth?'

Ainsworth quite understood the remote purpose of this suggestion, but he had not the heart or the hardihood to refuse to accede to it. So Doughty went out with a silver coin. At the end of half an hour he had not returned, but the chief still slept on. Johnny Chinaman came and made the proffer of an opium pipe; but Ainsworth declined it: at another time, alone, he thought, he might not be indisposed to try the experiment; but now, when he had undertaken a sacred duty, he could not. So he sat on a stool and waited till he became drowsy, and then he rose and walked up and down.

In one of his walks he paused and listened to the soft, disjointed murmurs of a sleeper. The voice sounded to him like one he had heard before—where, he could not remember. The voice first arrested his attention, but the things uttered gradually held it.

'Observe,' said the voice, 'the time that is proper and the season actually of the thing. . . . He will be a great sinner to look for the ripeness of business and articles in *Panguni*, and to have expectation of the fruit to drop in *Chittarai*. . . . I appear as a gentle cow, but to tell the truth with regards I am a hungry tiger. . . . Wait, wait, Daniel! With regard, be as the hungry beast in the jungle! . . . The young Sahib is like the blind man who has thrown his staff into the air; oh, yes—very; he is playing the part of the foolish person and son. . . . *Venkaiyam!* *Karuveppilai!*' . . .

Ainsworth went near, and had his suspicion confirmed: he recognised the words and the person as those of Daniel Trichinopoly. But he gazed and wondered. The sleek and gentle Daniel now looked no better than a truculent lascar or coolie: his turban was off and disclosed a bare shaven head; his clothes were gone—all except a loin-cloth—and revealed a brown figure of incredible thinness and wiriness; but he wore a most ferocious frown. Ainsworth did not understand the foreign words that he used occasionally, but he remembered them, and discovered afterwards that they were Tamil. He did not turn away, but still listened; for he did not doubt that 'the young Sahib' was George Suffield, and that in some crafty, underground, Oriental way Daniel was devising mischief against him, if not against the house of Suffield.

'*Venkaiyam!* *Karuveppilai!*' repeated Daniel (that is, Onions! Curry-leaves!)—'No, no; Daniel will make curry not any more, thank you, Sahib. Daniel in soon time will have plenty cash. . . . The young Sahib is the foolish person. . . . He makes with regard plenty too much noise. . . . Daniel! Daniel! All right, Daniel!' (that in imitation of a loud manner; then sinking into his own low, oily tone). . . . 'Oh yes; all right,

Daniel! With regard, Daniel knows, Daniel smiles, Daniel laughs in the trouser of his arm, . . . and Daniel waits. . . . Why, O daughter of my people, do you cry there for kanji? . . . Wait, and in soon time I fly to you as the wind, and you have plenty kanji and cash! . . . Yes, indeed and very truly. But even the wizard Tummattippattan himself was caught at last—yes, although he turned and escaped here and there! . . . The Black Water! . . . Oh! the Black Water rushes! Oh, the Black Water goes over! . . . Oh! the Red Fire! . . . It burns! It burns up! . . . Oh! he yelled, 'I drown! I roast! I burn!'

With a final yell, he bounded out upon the floor with fiery, rolling eyeballs, and dashed his hand as if to his sash to clutch a weapon. In an instant the Chinaman was between the opium-smitten Daniel and Ainsworth.

'London man stand too muchee near,' said he, putting Ainsworth back with a frown. 'Velly good no knifee! Johnny alway takee kniffee way!'

Johnny took his panting, trembling patient by the hand, led him back to his place, and helped him into his bunk; and Ainsworth returned to look at Mr Raynor. What he had heard, wandering and disjointed as it was, made a deep impression on him; and the concluding tableau gave him a significant lesson in racial characteristics: 'However smooth and civilised,' said he to himself, 'the Asiatic may appear, scratch him and you find the savage!'

The chief still slept on, murmuring at intervals soft musical nothings to himself; his gentle condition under the opium being in marked contrast with that of the truculent Daniel. Ainsworth sat on the stool and wearily waited. No Doughty came; but opium devotees—chiefly swarthy lascars or sallow and bilious-seeming Chinamen—slipped in and out silently like ghosts. With much ado Ainsworth kept awake; for he feared to drop asleep: he knew not what might befall him if he lost consciousness: the Chinaman passed silently now and then and cast an evil, slanting eye on him, and he knew that most of the occupants of the brown Hades must be, when awake, ruffians of the most unscrupulous and desperate character. A strange company, indeed, for the gentle, cultured John Raynor to choose to frequent.

One hour, two hours passed. Still the chief slept on; and still Doughty did not return. Three hours passed, and Ainsworth became very anxious: the time was creeping close to midnight, and Isabel, he knew, was waiting in the extremest uncertainty. He had a mind to attempt again to rouse Mr Raynor. But presently Mr Raynor relieved him by waking and calling softly for 'Johnny' and 'more.'

Ainsworth stepped quickly over to him. 'Mr Raynor,' said he, 'don't you think it is time you came home?'

'Home?' echoed Mr Raynor, and shook himself and looked at Ainsworth.—'Oh,' said he, 'Mr Ainsworth! Here? I hope you don't come here often! Dreadful! dreadful!'

'I have only come here for you, Mr Raynor,' said Ainsworth; 'I have a cab waiting for you. Come, and we can talk by the way.'

At that Johnny Chinaman came up, and Mr

Raynor endeavoured to give orders for further pipes, but Ainsworth kept urging: 'No, no, no!'

'Permit me,' said Mr Raynor. 'I will not—I cannot—be dictated to in this manner. But I have a regard for you, Mr Ainsworth; and when I have had one more pipe to steady my nerves—I need positively one pipe more: I know myself completely—then I'll come with you.'

How the matter might have ended there is no saying, had not Doughty appeared. In his presence the chief collapsed, half-sulkily, and permitted himself to be led away without a word: much to Ainsworth's amazement, till he considered that the persistent subjection at such a time of Mr Raynor to the one man he knew of unconquerable nerves must have become an ingrained habit.

So the erring father was recovered, and borne home in the waiting four-wheeler to his waiting daughter. He hung his head before her, smiled a sickly smile when she tried to rally him into cheerfulness, as if nothing had happened, declined to eat any supper, and went to bed, escorted by the faithful, silent, and penitent Doughty.

Then Ainsworth told Isabel of all his adventures and experiences, by no means omitting that one which had most impressed him: how he had seen and overheard Daniel Trichinopoly. They agreed that though all he had heard might have no more meaning than the wandering of one lunatic or fever-stricken, it had at least that meaning, and it seemed likely that there was sufficient behind it to take note of. They agreed also that Mr Suffield should not be troubled with this matter, since they both had plainly understood that the control of the mills and the Lancashire business in general were now committed entirely to George; but that it should be communicated to 'the young Sahib' himself, who had engaged Daniel, to make what he could of.

Therefore, when Ainsworth returned to his rooms a little later, he sat down and wrote to George Suffield. He said that certain business had taken him to an opium den in the East End, where he discovered Daniel Trichinopoly—the Indian or Cingalese person who, he understood, now enjoyed some position in the house of Suffield. He then related the curious things which he had overheard, and left it to George to judge of their consequence.

IN ICELAND.

HOUR after hour we had jogged along in the pelting rain, seeing nothing from under our lowered sou'-westers but the muddy legs of the pony in front, hearing nothing—all conversation having long died out—but the splash of forty hoofs along the brimming paths, or occasional clatter over a naked lava rock. Now and again we would reach a stretch of turf where the path broke into a maze of narrow channels continually uniting and diverging again. Then the pace would quicken, and with much shouting after those that chose too devious courses, and jostling of saddle-boxes, the whole cavalcade would scurry across to where—seldom far off—the roughness of the ground once more compelled a creeping

line, of which my friend and myself brought up the rear. Occasionally the mist would lift a little, revealing for the most part wastes of black sand around us, and jagged lava cliffs beyond.

It is not to be wondered at that they are a grave and silent people who inhabit such a land. The earth that innumerable seasons have moulded for us into a pleasant and fruitful home is here still a primeval chaos; the original heat, that is a mystery of geology to us, is here an ever present reality. But 'the land has two lords that are deathless,' and the other is even less relenting. Not a decade passes but some winter the great ice-sheet will drift down from the north, and not only round the beleaguered coast, but far inland, the next summer will be but a cruel fiction of the calendar. To these people, Nature must, consciously or not, appear not as the bountiful provider, but as a grim divinity, with whom, for a meagre subsistence, one must unceasingly wrestle, not always prevailing. One wonders not so much that they spent their time in the days of the Sagas trying to kill each other, but rather that they ever left off fighting, seeing how little life must have been worth, and how much any excitement. Surely of all the movements Westwards that make up so much of History, no stranger and bolder has been recorded than the voyage, ten centuries ago, of those Northmen who sailed over a thousand miles of ocean to the black desolate land, where only the ominous raven seems at home.

Now the last hill is surmounted, and across the swollen and turbid river there loom through the mist the little black turreted cross of Stathir Church, and the grassy roofs and many gables of the farm. Fording the river, we notice two children herding cattle, standing indifferently in the ice-cold water, with the rain pelting down on their bare heads, to watch us pass. Then by a turf-walled lane, ankle-deep in mud, we struggle to the pavement of lava blocks that runs round the whole farm buildings, and forms a sort of 'quay,' to which the ponies are brought alongside. We were tired after our ten hours in the saddle, somewhat damp in spite of waterproofs, and very cold, though it was August; for though the sun is often warm in Iceland, the air never is. Therefore, our hearts sank when we saw no cheerful glow from the window, no smoke from the chimney. The yelping of the little sheep-dog brought to the door a pleasant-looking girl of eighteen. She was dressed in the national and absolutely universal costume of the island: a long plain black dress, and a black silk cap with a very long tassel passed through a broad silver ring, and hanging down on to the shoulder. This sombre costume was brightened, however, by a coloured bow, with a beautiful old silver necklace over it.

Entering by the middle gable, we groped our way through a passage encumbered with all manner of implements and clothes, to the kitchen. We had tried to put out of our minds all ideas of the brightness and warmth of a farm kitchen in England, but some little comfort we had expected till now. A room it could scarcely be called, a cellar rather, a hole in the roof serving for window and chimney. On a great stone table that took up about half the floor-space, a fire

of brushwood—there is no other fuel in many districts, and not that even in some parts—was filling the whole place with blinding smoke. Furniture there was none except a plank propped on stones. On a beam above the fire hung an array of stockings, drying in the smoke. Half-warmed at last, and more than half-suffocated, we escaped to the ‘guest-room,’ which, but for the want of a fire, was fairly comfortable. Soon the savoury smell of ptarmigan frizzling in butter under the skilful hands of our guide, told us that supper was not far off. With fresh black bread, delicate little turnips and potatoes from the garden patch, and a bowl of the national *Skaer* (sour curds) before us, we began to feel better. But the crowning mercy was yet to follow—the fragrant coffee freshly roasted and ground, with unlimited thick cream. Never once did it fail us in Iceland, however little we expected from the outward appearance of our halting-place.

Then arose the question of lodging. The room we were in was small and musty, and the window was not made to open, while the air that got in at the door was worse than nothing. We decided, therefore, to sleep in the church, having been assured that that was quite an ordinary proceeding in Iceland. Of course there was no well-cushioned family pew in which a night’s sleep would be only an extension of a Sunday nap. One of us chose the floor; the other, suspicious of rats, tried an ingenious arrangement of benches; but a midnight catastrophe put us on a level, and on either side of the altar, watched over by some faded saints, we slept soundly till daybreak. The outlook then was depressing—everywhere the mist lay thickly. In the drizzling rain, two women were milking the sheep huddled together in a pen. Beyond, on the marshes, now showing sheets of water, a group of men were engaged on the farm-labour of Iceland—mowing, or rather shaving, carefully with sharp little scythes, the innumerable hummocks into which the frost cuts up the land, and which reached far as one could see, like an extension of the graveyard beside us. On the other side was the farmhouse, five long grassy roofs, over which a lamb was peacefully browsing, ending in as many brightly painted gables; the walls of alternate turf and stone, and very thick. The whole seemed more like a great burrow than a building, but looked picturesque and warm. Beyond it was the well-cultivated *tán*, or ‘fore-acre,’ all above the level of the morass around.

Seeing no prospect of more birds for dinner, we resolved to make an attempt upon the smoked mutton and pickled isinglass of the country, but failed miserably, and had to fall back on our own supplies of tinned provisions. With books and tobacco and frequent coffee, we managed to get through that day; but when next morning broke with not the slightest change, our thoughts turned longingly to the billiard table in the hotel at Reykjavik. We would have pushed on despite the weather; but our next halt was to be under canvas, and though we were prepared to face rain when once established, our hearts sank at the thought of pitching our tent and digging the necessary trench round it in such a downpour. Stay we must, then, and if so, some amusement must be found. Our light literature was at an end; of more solid reading we could stand only

a limited amount. We began by examining the old communion plate locked up under the altar, then we explored the attic above the church. This was a success. First we found an ancient brass side-saddle, elaborately ornamented in *repoussé* work, with a crupper bearing a verse from an Icelandic poem. We had seen the same sort of thing in the museum at Reykjavik, and secured this one for the price of a new saddle. For the rest of our journey it was strapped on one of the spare ponies, causing occasional surmises at our halting-places as to what had become of the lady. Next we found some old guns, the parts of a handloom—for weaving is carried on in all farmhouses during winter—and lastly, a box of old books, many of them in beautiful old bindings, but too far gone to bargain for.

Having exhausted the church, we turned our attention to the house. From the window opposite, the girls of the family—Ingebjorg and Gúðrún were their quaint names—were looking out at the pouring rain, evidently as weary of it as we were. We reflected that the ordinary civilities of a call meant in themselves pretty nearly nothing, and that it would not, therefore, be much of a drawback that we knew only about a dozen words of Icelandic, and they rather less English. Before we left home it had occurred to us that the Icelanders, being intelligent and well educated, but entirely cut off from intercourse with other people, would probably be much interested in pictures of the distant world, and we had therefore provided ourselves with a supply of photographs of whatever we thought would be most unlike the country we were going to. With these as excuse we crossed, not without difficulty, to the farmhouse, and were shown into the *bathstofa*, a long low room with a line of box-beds on either side. Here in most farm-houses almost the whole household sleeps, though in this one there was a separate small room partitioned off for the girls. Here also the eating goes on, one cannot say the meals, for there are none. Each takes what he wants when he likes, sitting on the edge of his bed.

We found our host reading poetry, of which Icelanders are usually fond. The photographs took immensely. ‘Windsor Castle and Park,’ ‘The Interior of Westminster Abbey,’ and most of all an instantaneous view of Hyde Park, excited evident though not demonstrative interest. They lasted most of the afternoon, and were borrowed again in the evening. After these, ‘Pigs-in-Clover,’ already forgotten in England, but a complete novelty in Iceland, served to pass another hour. Thus we got through the second day tolerably, and went to sleep with the feeling that surely Sunday would bring a change in the luck. Alas! we did not need to look out next morning, for the wind and rain had been loud on the windows all night through, and though the day showed occasional signs of grace, it was little better than the others. There was to be service in the church, only an occasional event in Iceland; so the guns and camera had to be removed from the pulpit betimes, and all made ready. As twelve drew near we could see little groups of riders bearing down upon us from all quarters, across the now almost flooded plain, and the field beside the church soon became lively as a horse-fair. To walk any distance in Iceland is almost

impossible—except sometimes in winter—owing to the want of roads and bridges, so that every member of the congregation within was represented by a pony without. These were tied in pairs, head and tail, so that they could not wander. Then came the dressing. Each woman had come in a luminous black skirt and jacket, as a protection from the mud, but these were all taken off and laid upon the chair-saddle. On this also the hat was left, every woman in the church appearing in the national head-dress and jewellery. Time is not reckoned with pedantic accuracy in Iceland; long after the service had begun, people came dropping in, while several left before the end. The church, holding about fifty people, was well filled, a remarkable fact, considering the distances that separate the farms, for there are no villages. Some travellers have argued from the apparent absence of religious observances in the farmhouses that the Icelanders are an irreligious people; but we were assured that summer is looked on as a 'close-time' for family worship, as well as for the children's schooling, everything being sacrificed to the hay harvest.

Long after the close of the service, the people hung about the church, chatting and exchanging letters and parcels, for it is thus that the rudimentary postal service of the island is supplemented.

As the day wore on, the curtain of mist slowly lifted, and we saw for the first time the range of hills that bounded the vast morass; and above them, far away to the east, the long ridge of Hecla, with the eternal snow lying on the eternal fire. Shortly after sunset the whole sky cleared, and a faint light in the north-east foretold the first aurora, a sign of the waning of summer. It seemed at first like the reflection in the sky of some vast moving light below the horizon, then as a veil of luminous cloud, but so delicate that the lightest of the real clouds seemed solid when entangled in its meshes. Soon a corresponding light rose from the opposite horizon, and the two meeting above us, gradually moved northwards till they formed an arch over the glow of the sunset. Long after the household of Stathr was sunk in sleep, we stood watching the sky, till the frosty night air drove us indoors.

Next morning we were awakened by the blessed sun streaming in at the windows, and found a cloudless sky, such as we had not yet seen in Iceland. Our stage was to be a short one, so we gave up the morning to taking photographs about the farm. Gúthrun had promised us she would dress herself in the beautiful gala costume of the country, only worn on grand occasions, such as a wedding; and thus we successfully photographed her. Then the girls nailed blankets over the window of their room, and the developing was watched with much interest. As we finished, the ponies were being driven in, and the laborious tying and strapping began again. After settling our very moderate bill, and purchasing some of the cloth that is spun, woven, and dyed on the farm, we said good-bye, surprised to find that it was not, after all, such a relief to get off. As we rode away slowly across the swamp, there gathered on the roof of the barn a sombre group of girls, the dogs crouching beside them, and the lamb nestling above in the

lee of a chimney. Silent and motionless they stood looking wistfully after us; and when long after we turned round, there was still the spot of black upon the green, till we reached the lava desert, and in the swirling clouds of dust, the farm, hills, and all disappeared from sight. J. C. O.

THE RED-HOT NEEDLE.

By H. F. ABELL.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

OCCASIONALLY, the monotony of every-day life in the Far East is broken by a veritable thunder-clap of news, some startling announcement, which by its interest makes ample amends for the almost absolute dearth of topics for conversation and discussion characteristic of ordinary times. Such was the case in the month of July 1881, in the far-distant port of Yokohama, Japan. The Comprador of the Pacific Bank obtained leave to take a short holiday of a few days, and did not return. In the meanwhile it was discovered that he, taking advantage of the tremendous power he could exercise by virtue of his position as trusted controller of the native business, had been systematically robbing the bank for some months past, and that his defalcations amounted to the very pretty sum of fifty thousand dollars, or ten thousand pounds sterling.

Ambrose Burdon, the bank Manager, who had been up country, was of course immediately sent for, and came to Yokohama with all haste. Burdon was a strange man, of reserved manner and retiring habits, who was classed by all who were acquainted with him as incomprehensible. He was a fine, tall, fair-haired Englishman of forty, with a face which instantly impressed strangers favourably, but which—so said men who knew him—was capable of being transformed with an expression of absolute malignity when its owner was annoyed and disappointed. Of his personal habits and predilections, little or nothing was known, even in a small place where the actions of the most unimportant individuals were always liable to microscopic examination, except that he loved money. For money, it was whispered, he would do anything. The only amusement he shared with his fellow-countrymen was play, and this in the face of the fact that he was generally unlucky. How he spent his leisure time, nobody knew; but strange stories were afloat about him, amongst which was one to the effect that he had been met at a remote inland village far off the beaten track alone with Ah Why, the Comprador, whose disappearance was now agitating the community.

Of course the meeting with the Chinaman might have been accidental, or the Manager and his Comprador might have been up country upon some delicate and important business which demanded secret negotiation; but the public is generally ready to judge an unpopular man harshly, and so, when the news of the robbery became known, over more than one tiffin table it was whispered that if anybody could throw light upon the affair it was Ambrose Burdon. Nobody, however, could have been more dumfounded and amazed at the news, and nobody could have taken more prompt, decisive measures for the apprehension of the fugitive, than the Manager. 'Just my

luck!' he bitterly exclaimed. 'I find the branch almost insolvent; I set to work, and I make it the most paying branch east of Singapore, and then this happens!'

All efforts to trace the whereabouts of Ah Why were fruitless. Men noticed in the meanwhile that Burdon grew more haggard in appearance, and more restless and unsettled in manner; and he became the object of general sympathy, for it was known that he would be severely dealt with by the bank authorities.

During the week which followed, Burdon learned his fate. The Hong-kong letter informed him that the Inspector of Branches would arrive in Yokohama by the next mail for the purpose of making a searching inquiry into the affair, and that he was to hold himself in readiness to leave for England at any moment, in order to explain matters to the Board of Directors. Burdon took it very quietly, and made an excellent meal after it. Then he lit a cigar, told his boy to place the long cane chair in the veranda, and proceeded to digest other letters brought by the mail. The first he opened bore the Chancery Lane, London, post-mark, and was as follows:

'DEAR SIR—In our last communication we informed you that in accordance with instructions from your late uncle, Mr Hercules Tunstall, we should open the letter he indited some time before his death, which said letter was not to be opened until six calendar months before your cousin, Miss Ruth Tunstall's coming of age. Acting on your behalf as co-trustee for the deceased gentleman's estate, we have carried out this instruction, with the following result'—

(Here he was interrupted by the appearance of his boy with a note. Burdon always disliked interruption. At this moment it was particularly ill-timed, and his face assumed the bad expression which men knew it could assume under pressure.)

'Confound you!'—he began. The boy handed him the note. Burdon examined it, and his face brightened. 'Who brought this?' he asked.

'That piecey China steward on board English mail,' replied the servant.

'All right! Can do!' said Burdon; and the boy disappeared. Burdon put the note unopened in his pocket, and proceeded with his London letter.)

'With the following result. With the exception of a few legacies, amongst which is one of a hundred pounds per annum to you, the whole of the deceased gentleman's estate will pass to his daughter, Ruth Tunstall, upon her attaining the age of twenty-one years. Should she die before attaining the age of twenty-one years, you, as the next of kin, will inherit the property. We have of course not yet informed Miss Tunstall of this, and shall await your instructions.—Yours faithfully,

TAPER & SEALE.'

'Lucky girl!' was Burdon's comment; 'and I, when I get the sack from the bank, shall have a hundred a year to live on.—Well, what's next? One from her, by Jove!' He opened a letter addressed to him in the delicate feminine hand which young ladies so thoroughly despise nowadays, and read:

'MY DEAR COUSIN AMBROSE—I think I ought to write and tell you of my own great news before all others, although you may think me selfish for so doing. John Felling, the head of the open Bill Department in your head office, asked me to be his wife last night, and I accepted him.'

'Great heavens!' muttered Burdon. 'There's a young fool she's made herself, and with thirty thousand pounds coming to her! There's one thing: he doesn't know it, and she doesn't!')

'And I accepted him, and am the happiest girl in the world. I tell you before anybody else, even before my aunts, because I know how great an interest you take in me; and I don't think you will be so angry with me, a poor girl, for marrying a poor man, as they are sure to be. But John is getting on so well that he tells me not to fear, and that all will turn out for the best. So don't be angry, my dear cousin. You know I always have my father's allowance of a hundred a year; John has two hundred and fifty; and when I come of age I suppose there must be a little something for me, although I know it cannot be much, as you remember how poor father was always lamenting his poverty.'

'Stingy old dog!' growled Burdon; 'never gave a cent away in his life; dressed like a junior clerk, and all the while was making dollars hand over fist!')

'So, you see, we shall be able to live quietly and decently.'

'When are you coming to see us? It seems so long since you were in England. Jack is such a good fellow, and I think he grows more like what I remember you to have been, every day; and when I put the two photographs together, the likeness is absolutely ridiculous, the more so because you are utterly unconnected with him, and must be quite ten years older than he is. He is very worried and anxious just now; but he doesn't tell me what it is about; so I hope it is nothing serious. My aunts desire to be most kindly remembered to you, and would dearly like one of your chatty, amusing letters. Good-bye, my dear Cousin Ambrose.—Yours very affectionately,

RUTH TUNSTALL.'

Ambrose Burdon refolded the letter slowly, and sat for some moments looking ahead of him with eyes which saw nothing for the raging waves of thought which tossed through his brain. Then he suddenly remembered the note brought by his boy, and took it from his pocket; rose, tore open the envelope, withdrew a thin paper, which he submerged in his washing-basin, and held up to the light.

'That's all right!' he muttered, after studying the paper for some moments. 'My part of the bargain is completed; and now for his. I have made him a free man. Let us see if he will make me a rich man.'

Ambrose Burdon dined at the Club that night. He said nothing about the news brought by the mail; but he soon perceived that it was known, and was astonished to find that there were so many who sympathised with him. He was never a jovial companion; but it was remarked that upon this occasion he was much more nearly

jovial than usual, and that he seemed to regard very lightly what was generally understood as a very critical period in the career of a man who, by the business measurement of years, might still be accounted young. He drank freely ; and when he left the Club at eleven o'clock, he was in an elated condition very unusual with him.

At half-past eleven a 'jinrickisha,' conveying a closely muffled-up figure, dashed through the European settlement, passed down Curio Street, down the Basha Michi, and, just before reaching the railway station, pulled up. From it alighted Ambrose Burdon. He paid the coolie, turned down a narrow street of poor shanties, and after some examination of the signs and emblems with which they were hung, knocked at the shutters of a better sort of house, which, by the sign of the three great white balls suspended over the door, he knew was a druggist's. After a considerable delay, during which Burdon fidgeted uneasily and muttered what were probably not beatitudes, the shutter was opened a few inches, and a voice demanded who was there. Burdon replied in Japanese ; the entrance was opened a foot or two wider, and he was admitted. He walked through the outer shop to a back room, where, over a brasier of charcoal, a Chinaman sat huddled, with an opium pipe at his side. He was a very old man, more like a mummy than a being of flesh and blood, and a large pair of horn spectacles on his nose added to his uncanny appearance.

'I am the gentleman referred to by our friend Ah Why,' said Burdon. 'Here is my letter of introduction.' So saying, he handed the thin-paper note he had received that afternoon to the old man, who examined it with minute attention, every now and then darting a glance at Burdon, as if comparing him with a written description. The old man then rose with more alertness than his appearance gave him credit for possessing, went to a cabinet, touched a spring which opened a secret drawer, and from the drawer took a packet, which he examined by the light of the oil lamp.

'Did you ever see a man starved to death ?' he asked suddenly, and speaking excellent English.

'Once—yes,' replied Burdon, 'in the street at Wu-chang on the Yang-tse.'

'Very well ; I shall be starved to death if this is traced to me,' said the old man.

'I'll take care of that,' said Burdon impatiently, for the Chinaman was fondling the packet, as if unwilling to part with it. 'Come—it's getting late !'

The old man handed him the packet. Burdon saw that it was marked with a single broad, arrow-headed line in red, with characters beneath, and asked the signification thereof.

'That means Red-hot Needle,' replied the Chinaman.

'Red-hot Needle !' exclaimed his visitor. 'What does that mean ?'

'Have you never read the classics ?' asked the old man.

'You mean your classics ?—Mencius and all those fellows ? Why, my good man, I don't know a sign of your lingo,' said Burdon. 'But what do they say about the Red-hot Needle ?'

'Nothing,' replied the old man gravely. 'But they tell you what became of Hai Wang, the

Mandarin of Soochow, who put the fresh tax on copper ; what became of Ah Qui, the faithless wife of General Ming ; what became of the Hai Ling brothers, seven of them, who— But never mind ! You give me receipt ?'

'Why ?' asked Burdon.

'For my protection,' replied the Chinaman.

'You don't need it,' said Burdon, and without another word left the shop.

C U R L E W L O R E.

It is not only 'upon the moorland' that 'lonely curlew pipe.' As the inland shooter in such wild districts comes across these melancholy birds, so the seashore wanderer with a gun, which is the exactly appropriate phrase, finds the curlew even more familiar to him—familiar, that is, by sound and sight at a distance, rarely by the actual possession of a shot bird. And on the whole the curlew is far more familiar to most by sound. That eerie, melancholy whistle, which when heard in the gloaming amid the ripple of the waves, as they betoken the ebbing tide, seems so much in unison with the scene on a winter evening, is a sound which one never forgets, though all one's after experiences may be of inland shooting. No wonder that in some parts of the old world west of England that wild thrilling note is held to have something mysterious about it. In one locality the notes of curlews at night are called the sounds of 'Gabriel's Hounds,' in another, those of the 'Seven Whistlers.' In most, so far as the locality of which we speak is concerned, these birds are looked upon in a different light from others. Without going so far as to say that the same opinion exists about them as that held by the Irish west-coast peasants of the wild swans—namely, that those who shoot them will probably find some fatal or serious misfortune follow—there is yet in some of the localities to which we allude an idea that in all respects the curlews are ill-omened birds—an idea which in connection with gunpowder is no doubt a satisfactory one for the birds.

This local idea, however, is by no means widely spread ; for over many a marshy and moorland district, and along many a coast-line, there is every disposition to expend gunpowder on the curlew, if only there be a chance of getting within range. This, however, is a matter of comparatively rare occurrence. Few birds, except perhaps the wood-pigeon, are as shy as the curlew, and each has as keen a perception of the proximity of a gun as have the rook and crow, both of which know it as well as the keenest hand in Birmingham. The curlew in winter, however, is among the valued trophies of the shore or moorland shooter ; and not without reason. The bird is, as has been said, one of the wariest ; hence, a successful shot necessarily implies much perseverance, and as we all know, 'the labour we delight in physics pain.' And the curlew when skilfully cooked—and there are various ways of eliminating the fishy taste, which in some birds is not more than that in a wild duck—is to many palates a dainty dish. That it is far more familiar than it was is evidenced by its now frequent

appearance in the game-dealers' shops in London and the great towns.

The curlew is an interesting and, in its way, a handsome bird. To many inhabitants of inland parts of the country it is utterly unfamiliar; but its grayish-black plumage and long curved bill, delicate in its sense of what Dugald Dalgetty calls 'provaunt,' as are those of the snipe and woodcock, are as well known as they are prized by the shooter whose beat extends over the sea-shore, the marsh, or the moor. The curlew, like some other birds, is paradoxical in its breeding-time; for while it is ordinarily one of the most persistent birds in keeping its distance from all human intruders at the time of nidification, in the months of March and April—when of course nobody who is fit to carry a gun shoots at anything but rabbits, and perhaps the birds may know this—the curlew assumes an audacity which is quite different from its ordinary conduct. If you happen to be walking in any of its breeding-places on the higher grounds, which slope away from the coast, or inland by some marsh or mere, the bird flies near you, whistling continually. Its eggs are big ones, and pale in colour, often laid under a furze or whin bush. At nesting time the Welsh farmer calls the shrill note 'the curlew's swearing,' and thinks it prognosticates rain. Like the landrail, the youngsters at first are quite unlike the old birds. As in the case of the landrail with regard to their colour, so in the case of the curlew that characteristic length of bill which distinguishes the family is for some time absent.

Though essentially a shore-going bird—our own personal experience, and we have followed many, gun in hand, is far more derived from this class than from the moorland birds—the shy, wary, circling curlew, which seems like the gull to be most in touch with sand and wind and waves, will sometimes be found, as much to the shooter's as to the bird's astonishment, in fields of pasture or root-crops. It loves a succulent diet, even as do the snipe and woodcock, but with the distinction that its food is more saline than fresh. However, those birds found in the fields are as eager as are rooks and gulls—frequently found there also in stormy weather—for grubs, snails, worms, and such 'small deer.' The main food of the majority of curlews is, however, found on the sands and at the ebb tide. Then it is that curlews, ducks, plovers, and various smaller shore birds industriously explore the increasing expanse of gleaming wet sands as the ripple of the receding waves goes lower and lower. Little hollows are left full of salt water; tufts of seaweed, brown, green, and crimson, here and there variegate the yellow sands; and various forms of food are exposed to the eager beaks of the winged crowd on the shore; while the big black-backed gulls, usually hunting in couples, plod with deliberate powerful wings—and always flying against the wind—along the margin of the tide, with keen restless eyes that note the smallest edible object. Among all this crowd, however, those that keep most successfully and continuously out of the reach of the gun are the curlews. They use those long curved beaks in corkscrew fashion, and thus obtain various small shell-fish; but unlike the oyster-catchers, who sometimes will crack the shells, the curlews are not particular, and having

an ostrich-like digestion, swallow such dainties whole.

This dainty diet makes the curlew in its turn a dainty, to such as do not object to something of a fishy flavour. Our ancestors had a fine expansive taste in the way of table-birds, as a study of ancient chronicles, bills of fare, and 'house-books' proves. They held the curlew in much higher estimation than we do; and it may be that our modern self-sufficiency in this as in some other matters underrates our ancestors' wisdom. At any rate, when we consider the relative value of money past and present, and recollect the old rhyme—

A curlew, be she white or be she black,
She carries twelvepence on her back—

it is clear that the bird was reckoned not only as one of the most edible, but also of the most valuable marketable kind.

We have said that the curlew is about the most difficult bird of all to get a shot at with any reasonable chance of success, unless, indeed, by one of those exceptional incidents which come within the experience of every shooter. But there is a way of getting such a shot, and that is by calling in the aid of the incitement of curiosity, which, indeed, has proved perilous to many other creatures than curlews. If haply on a winter's afternoon—that is the best time—you pause on your long-shore wanderings, and not unwillingly 'rest and be thankful' behind some coign of vantage, such as an ancient piece of wreckage, or a crag, or anything of a similar nature, and raise your cap in the manner known to skirmishers in action behind trenches when they want to 'draw the enemy's fire,' the usually wary birds—provided nothing else of you be visible—will gradually circle round nearer and nearer to investigate this unknown object, until at last they come within range. Then it is your own fault or your gun's—which, by the way, usually gets the blame in the case of non-success—if you do not succeed in dropping one or a brace, though the latter is a much rarer eventuality.

Various ancient and curious superstitions—some of them ancient indeed—cluster round the curlew. In some places the old inhabitants would not shoot at them 'for love or money.' These ideas differ in different localities. Some hold, as in the case of the robin, that the curlew's shooter finds his hand shake for ever after. Others, that sleepless nights, haunted by the bird's melancholy whistle, will be the result. Others, that no luck will attend the house in which the shooter lives until the next hatching-time. To recapitulate all these beliefs would make too great a demand upon space. In spite of them all, the average 'rough-shooter' in winter considers the curlew as a valuable addition to his day's gains.

Hitherto, we have spoken of the ordinary curlew. There is another individual of the race far less known. The stone curlew loves the downs and fallows. As its name shows, it prefers such localities as these where there are many flints and similar stones, which, indeed, by the wonderful adaptability of Nature, help to conceal the young, the similarity of the plumage and the hue of the surrounding stones being so great as to

deceive the ordinary eye. This is the case with other shore-birds, of which perhaps one of the best instances that can be mentioned is found in the ring dotterels, which in spring are to be seen continually running about on the higher part of the beach, and always where pebbles predominate over sand. Stone curlews thrive well among the stones, and enjoy the succulent diet in the shape of grubs and worms which are to be found in the fields; while the young birds run like land-rails, and the plumage so exquisitely matching the surroundings, renders them, when crouching, most unlikely to be seen.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

BY CHARLES EDWARDES.

L

THERE was trouble in the minds of the three inmates of Bethel Cottage. The three were Mrs Griffiths and her daughter Nancy, and their lodger John Chester, who worked in the Penlyn slate quarries of Nantlle, whose pits were famous far and wide for their fearful depth. Mrs Griffiths was a widow. Her husband's death had endowed her with a small annuity, which, with the money she received from young Chester, sufficed for the simple needs of the household. Nancy was nineteen, and John Chester was five-and-twenty. As the girl was exceedingly pretty, and as amiable as she was pretty, and as John Chester was as susceptible to feminine charms as most men of his age, that which might have been foreseen duly happened. Though young Chester had only been in Nantlle six months, he was fast in love with Nancy. He believed the girl returned his love—though hitherto he had not dared to ask her, for he was a proud, sensitive fellow, and he dreaded an unwelcome reply, which would have compelled him to leave Bethel Cottage for ever.

This was the trouble. A letter had come that morning from Reuben Tallack, saying that the writer would be in Nantlle late in the evening, and that he hoped he might venture to come bag and baggage to Bethel Cottage, as in the 'dear old times.' Those were his words, and he underlined them with two thick strokes. Further, as it appeared that Reuben had written from some foreign port to Mr Penlyn, asking for employment in the quarry, and had found a favourable reply awaiting him at Southampton, it seemed likely that he would remain in Nantlle for a considerable time.

At the first reading of this letter, Mrs Griffiths had expressed the utmost pleasure at its contents. So too had Nancy. The girl's eyes became suddenly so bright and beautiful, and there was such a sweet flush on her cheek, that John Chester felt like a man who had received a stab in the heart.

'I don't know,' Mrs Griffiths had exclaimed, 'when I had better news. I shall be very, very happy to have him here again.'

Nancy seemed to take the same view of the matter.

But Mrs Griffiths chanced to look towards her lodger, who had ceased eating his breakfast, and she changed all in a moment. Nancy also turned her eyes upon John Chester, and she grew pale because of the thunder-cloud on the young man's face. Then, with the briefest of excuses, John Chester had risen and taken his work-coat and set off for the quarry, cursing his luck, and wishing with all his heart he had never set eyes on Nancy Griffiths's sweet beguiling little face.

When they were alone, the two women appeared to dismiss their lodger and his eccentricity wholly from their minds.

'We must,' said Mrs Griffiths cheerily, 'give him your own little room, Nancy dear. It is what he will like best. Oh, my dear, if only he could be with us always, as when your poor father was alive!'

To this the girl made no reply, for she was thinking of John Chester, though she seemed to be more particularly engrossed with the geraniums in the parlour window.

'There is,' continued the widow, with her chin in her hand and a reflective look in her eyes, 'no young man, in my opinion, to be compared to our Reuben.—Don't you think so, Nan?' she asked, with momentary animation.

'Yes, mother,' replied the girl, still with her eyes on the plants.

'What other young man in all Wales, I should like to know, would have stayed with us as *he* did just because your father on his deathbed asked it of him? And that wasn't the half of what he did for us, Nan, though I never thought it was wise to tell you about it. I'll tell you now, though, my dear, because you've grown from a girl into a woman.'

'I don't think I have, mother,' murmured Nancy, this time glancing at Mrs Griffiths, and with that fair rose-bloom suffusing her cheeks afresh.

'Oh, but you have, my dear,' insisted the widow. 'I was married at twenty myself.'

'What has that got to do with it, mother dear?' whispered Miss Nancy. She had risen at these words and put her arms round her mother's neck. Her cheeks were burning. The consciousness that this was so alone restrained her from pressing them against her mother's cheeks. She did not wish to be asked for an explanation of their torrid state; nor did she wish for the medicine with which Mrs Griffiths was sure to dose her if she could not tender a satisfactory reason for their unusual warmth.

'It has much to do with it, Nan,' replied Mrs Griffiths. 'Reuben Tallack worked for me and you, my dear, just as if he was the very best of sons to me and of brothers to you. But for him, I don't know, I'm sure, if the debts we owed would ever have been paid; and I am quite sure I should never have got the insurance money—they bothered me so with their letters and disagreeable suspicions.'

'Yes, mother; I know Reuben was very, very kind,' said Nancy.

'"Kind" is a poor word to express it, my dear Nan.'

'Why, mother,' exclaimed the girl, abruptly drawing apart from the widow, and looking as if

she were going to ask an unanswerable question—‘why did he leave Nantlle as he did—without saying “good-bye” even to us? I have hardly forgiven him for that yet.’

‘I will tell you, Nancy,’ replied Mrs Griffiths. ‘Sit down, my dear little girl.’

‘Do you mind very much if I keep standing? I don’t feel tired enough to care to sit, and I’ll pay just as much attention to what you say, mother.’ With these words, Nancy seemed rather to belie herself, for she straightway went to the canary in his cage and offered the bird her dainty little finger to peck at.

‘Very well, my dear; I won’t make a long tale of it, either. It was just this. Poor Reuben lost his heart to you from the very first, Nancy, and there’s no denying it. You were only sixteen then, and he didn’t like to speak about it to me or any one. And you grew more and more dear to him—those are his own words, Nan—as the months passed. Even when you were eighteen last year, he thought you were too young to be spoken to on the subject——’

‘Indeed, yes,’ murmured Nancy, so softly, however, that Mrs Griffiths did not hear her.

‘And,’ continued the widow, ‘it was just for your sake, and nothing else in the wide, wide world, that he went away and took that sea-trip. He was a quick-acting sort of young man, was Reuben, for all his noble, steady determinations; and that was why he went off as he did, leaving a letter, and asking us to keep his things for him. But I know as well as I know yourself, my dear little Nan, that he’s coming home now to settle it all. He’s had that sea-voyage with his uncle, and he’s been thinking of you all the while he has been among the wild waves of the stormy ocean; and now he wants you to make him happy.’

‘Mother,’ cried the girl, ‘you ought not to talk like that; you can’t *really* know that he means that!’

‘Gently, gently, my dear. I feel that I know Reuben as if he were my own boy. His letter doesn’t say anything about it, of course; but that’s natural. It’s only proper, though, that you should be prepared; and that, my dear, is why I tell you all this.’

The girl’s face had, while her mother was speaking, shown much emotion—to the canary. Latterly, her lips had begun to quiver in rather an ominous way. Now she could contain herself no longer. ‘Mother, mother,’ she cried, like one acutely hurt, ‘I don’t want to have Reuben ask me to be his wife. Why can’t he stay away?’ Then she put her pretty crimsoned face into her hands, and, dropping upon the sofa, sobbed bitterly.

Mrs Griffiths, good woman, was first amazed, and afterwards extremely distressed. She did all she could to soothe her little Nancy, and reproached herself strongly for the want of tact with which she fancied she had exposed Reuben Tallack’s secret.

‘Come, come, my poor lamb,’ she crooned, as she clasped the girl in her arms. ‘I’m a silly, good-for-nothing old woman, and was wrong to tell it you like that. Don’t fret so, Nan dear. Look at your poor old mother and say you forgive her, and she won’t grieve you again in the same way.’

Mrs Griffiths said much more to the same effect. She was not a very wise woman, though good and true-natured to the core. The upshot was that Nancy at length took heart, wiped her eyes, smiled like the sun through an April shower, and shortly afterwards fell to caressing her mother in her turn. The widow was easily persuaded to promise not to think anything more about Reuben’s supposed designs upon her daughter’s heart. After all, it might be as Nancy assured her: that she had taken young Tallack’s communications too seriously; and besides, so long an absence was quite enough to drive the love out of his heart, if ever it had really been in it.

But though Mrs Griffiths yielded to persuasion, as the day advanced she became less and less convinced. The womanliness in her sympathised with Reuben in his hopes, even as the maternal instinct in her made her yearn to conciliate Nancy at all cost.

Nancy, too, as the hour approached when Reuben would be with them, felt more and more uncomfortable. How could she face Reuben, believing as she did in her heart that he loved her as only the noblest and strongest natures can love, and that he meant to do all he could to win her, and knowing that she did not love him as a girl ought to love her heart’s true and only lord?

As for John Chester, when he came in to dinner he looked blacker than ever. He was a handsome dark fellow, with eyes such as women admire. He said little during the meal, which he ate with a shockingly poor appetite. The only words he uttered with any show of interest were these: ‘I suppose there’s no doubt Mr Tallack’ll be here to-night?’ and being assured that there was no reasonable doubt in the matter, the old shadow on his face darkened yet deeper. He misread Nancy’s anxious expression altogether. And so he returned to the quarry with thoughts and aspirations even darker than his countenance.

II.

Reuben Tallack came by the evening train from the south. The happiness in his eyes was a sight to see. Even Nancy for the moment seemed to forget the awkwardness of her situation in her gladness at shaking hands with him.

‘I’ve a secret to tell you,’ he said, very soon after his arrival; and he looked at Nancy, who did not meet his glance.

‘Time enough for that, Reuben, my dear lad, by-and-by,’ interposed Mrs Griffiths quickly. ‘And here comes John Chester,’ she added, with relief, as she nodded towards the window. The click of the latch had warned her of her lodger’s approach.

‘John Chester!’ exclaimed Reuben—‘who may he be?’

As that person himself entered the room even while he was speaking, the introduction was made formally. He did not attempt to recommend himself to Reuben by his manner.

‘I hear you’re coming on at the works,’ he said with a sour look, as he held out his hand.

‘That’s so, lad,’ replied Reuben, shaking the hand heartily. ‘I’m main pleased to come back to the old place. There’s special reasons for it.

—Yes, you may well colour up, little Nan. I'm much mistaken if you won't know more about them same special reasons soon yourself.—She's grown *almost* pretty since I left, mother' (he was wont to call Mrs Griffiths 'mother'); 'but I knew she would.'

In her heart the girl was quite angry with Reuben for these words. Yet they were what she might have expected, supposing that her own and her mother's anticipations were to be realised.

As for John Chester, he just bit his lip and turned away.

'There's not much amiss with her, Reuben,' said Mrs Griffiths. 'And she's a good girl, which is better than being a pretty one.—Surely, you're not going, John?'

'I guess I am,' was that young man's reply. 'And I shan't be in till late. I'm going to the club. You'll like to talk over old times, you three.' So saying, with a nod, John Chester went away. But he did not go to the club; he merely returned to the quarries. For two or three hours he stayed there brooding, on the edge of the most fearsome of the holes that had been dug in the earth for the removal of the slate from the rocks. The excavation was fully three hundred yards deep, with sides nearly perpendicular, and hung with ladders in two or three places, connecting the different small perches whereon the men did their quarrying.

As the light fell, the noise of the evening shift of workers in the quarry died away. Only in one section of the mine did it continue. This was where the rocks yielded a greenish slate, for which there was at that time a particular demand. Lanterns were slung at this end of the pit, and the sound of the blows soon echoed eerily in the darkness.

John Chester was an impulsive, impressionable man, with the average faults of the Celt as well as his average good qualities. It seemed to him that he had been made a fool of. Mrs Griffiths had that afternoon hinted pretty plainly why this fellow Tallack had come back to Nantlle. He could not understand it altogether. Until twenty-four hours ago, he could have sworn that Nancy's heart was his, and no other man's. He clenched his fists as he sat thus musing, and peering unconsciously into the bottom of the pit, where the water lay so green and still. In the starlight it was merely a pool of ink; but by day it was green as an olive.

There were tales told among the miners of the dead men who lay in the bottom of the pool. Few believed these legendary stories. Yet they were possible enough; for the water was deep, and though Nantlle was ordinarily a well-behaved little place, occasionally quarrels broke out among the miners, and men were missing now and again, without apparent rhyme or reason.

John's thoughts now took a wicked turn. The sweat stood in drops upon his face, though the night was cool rather than sultry. He fidgeted as he sat, but still the sweat oozed from his pores, and by the placid light of the stars you might have seen the intensity of his troubled reflection marked by the wrinkles on his forehead. At length he stood up, nodded his head like one resolved, peered once again into the pit, and then turned away with a shudder. 'He shall not have her,' he muttered.

He walked along the quarry edge until he came to a little chamber excavated laterally in the rock. A lamp was burning inside. Having knocked at the door and received an answer, he entered. A man was there at a desk, with his hat on, and smoking a pipe. He seemed surprised to see Chester. But the other did not give him time to speak.

'I've called, sir, to ask that Tallack and me may work together, if you've no objection. He's the new hand that comes on to-morrow, and he's lodging with Mrs Griffiths. I'd like to have the teaching of him, sir.'

The foreman laughed. 'All right, Chester. You needn't have come down here this time o' night for that.'

'Thank you, sir,' answered John Chester. 'I'd a bit of a headache, and I thought I'd step out, and so I came along here.—Good-night, sir.'

'Good-night to you.'

This settled, John Chester left the quarry yard. But he did not return to Bethel Cottage. He passed the door, stopped for an instant, and listened to the eager talking that was in progress behind the lighted window—with the canary and the geraniums sketched in shadow upon the blind—and then went on up the valley. If he had walked for two or three brisk hours, he would have come out by Lake Cwellyn at the foot of old Snowdon. But he did not do that; he crossed some meadows to the right until he reached the still gleaming waters of the Nantlle Lake. Here he sat down again and resumed his brooding. The breeze from the east, whispering up the valley from Snowdon's top, did not seem to cool him much, for he loosened his necktie and acted more than once as if he were oppressed for breath.

He did not return home until past ten o'clock: Reuben and Nancy had gone to bed by then. Mrs Griffiths was very kind to John; but he rebuffed all her efforts to induce him to eat something, late though it was.

The next morning, however, John Chester came down to breakfast in quite a different mood. There was a certain unnatural levity in his conduct. 'I was a bit off colour, yesterday,' he said to Reuben apologetically. 'I'm a surly brute sometimes—ain't I, Nan?'

'You're not always *just* the same, John,' replied the girl, with a sweet but rather constrained smile.

'Oh, never mind,' exclaimed Reuben cheerily. 'We're all like that at times. I expect I'll be a bit down to-night after a day's work. Coming straight from the sea, you know, a fellow feels being tied down to ground-work.'

'And that reminds me,' observed John, as if he had but just thought of it, 'that you're to work in my section. I'll put you up to it, if you like.'

'Thank'ee; nothing will please me better.'

Ere they left the house, Nancy managed to catch John apart from the others. She looked at him so that he longed to clasp her to his heart; his eyes showed the fervour of his passion.

'John,' she whispered, 'it was kind of you to be like that with Reuben to-day. You are a dear good old fellow, John.'

At these words he started aside in a frenzy, and the veins on his brow swelled and became purple

as a damson. There was an oath on his lips, and he could hardly keep it from breaking loose, though he had never yet used strong language before Nancy Griffiths. The girl was horror-stricken. She watched him swing out of doors and bang the garden wicket behind him, and her heart grew heavy as iron in her.

A minute or two later, Reuben Tallack was ready to follow John Chester. He seemed surprised that the other had not waited for him. 'What made him go off like that? He's a queer chap, this Chester. I don't know what to make of him.'

'Reuben,' said Nancy, 'I want you to do something, and as soon as ever you can—this very morning, please.'

'Well, little Nan, I'll do it for sure, if I can.'

'It's easy enough: just tell John all you told us last night.'

'About me and us; do you mean that?'

'Yes, please.'

'Bless your little heart! I understand.'

Reuben stooped over the girl and kissed her on the cheek. It was a calm sort of kiss, nor did it bring the colour to Nancy's cheeks.

When Reuben reached the quarries and reported himself at the office, he was at once shown to a part of the pit where three men were working. One of the three was John Chester, and he was working like a fiend. The ladders here were hung in some very ticklish places. For about twenty yards a parallel pair of them overhung the water, there some five hundred feet below.

John Chester looked up when he heard Reuben's voice. He called to one of his mates to act the part of mentor. 'I'll come up to you directly,' he cried, and went on splitting the rock like a madman.

He worked on and on for two hours without ceasing.

'Whatever's the matter with Chester?' asked one of the others: 'I never saw such a fellow as he is this morning.'

'Isn't he always like this?' John heard Reuben demand; and then he heard the laugh that greeted the reply which he did not hear.

Shortly afterwards, he threw down his pick. 'I'm going down the Duke's Nose,' he said to his mate.

They called this precipitous outward and then inward dip of the rock the Duke's Nose because of its resemblance to the Duke of Wellington's well-known proboscis.

He took a strong pair of pinchers with him, and, having reached a place where he fancied himself unobserved, deftly loosened the fasteners which held one of the ladders to the rock. Then he reascended, and for the first time joined Reuben. 'Aren't you tired?' he asked.

'Well,' said Reuben, 'I must say I am—there's no denying it.'

'Knock off for a bit. I want to show you what a fine place the Penlyn pit is. There ain't another like it anywhere.'

Willingly enough, Reuben put down his pick and pulled on his coat. They descended together, John Chester leading, until they came to the perpendicular part where the ladder bifurcated. Here Reuben Tallack hesitated, while the other stepped on to the second ladder of the two.

'I say, Chester, this is a bad-looking spot and no mistake,' observed Reuben.

'Are you afraid?'

'Afraid? Well, I don't know that. But I'm going to marry a dear little girl in a week or two, and—'

'Any one can see you're a coward,' said Chester with dreadful hardness.

The other looked down at his companion curiously. 'You've no right to say that to me.'

'I say it all the same. I don't believe you dare come on where I'm going.'

Reuben was just about to set his feet on the unsafe ladder, when he restrained himself. 'Look here, Chester,' he said. 'I don't know what to make of you. Still, I've a notion you're not such a bad fellow as you've been trying to make yourself out. I'm not a coward; but it's always possible a fellow may miss his footing and go to the next world in a moment. If that happens to me, will you promise to break it gently to my little Cornish girl? She'll be in Nantle next week? Will you promise?'

John Chester stared for reply.

'Well, you won't? Then I'm coming and chance it.'

Reuben was already lowering his feet, when John Chester cried in a voice of thunder: 'Keep off it—for the love of God. Get back.'

Almost simultaneously he sprang from his ladder to the lowest rungs of the ladder above the injured one. Then grasping the bars beneath Reuben's body, and with his feet lightly resting on the ladder that was to have hurled his fancied rival to the bottom of the pit, he effectually blocked the way.

'I want to speak to you,' he cried. 'Will you climb up a bit?'

Reuben did so. They came to a level space, where they both left the ladder.

'Now, then, tell me,' said John Chester, 'did I understand you to say you're not going to marry Nancy Griffiths?'

'Certainly you did.'

John Chester went pale as snow. 'My God!' he muttered.

'I don't suppose it's news to you,' observed Reuben, 'that little Nan's lost her heart to you.'

'Lost her heart to me?'

'As true as I stand here, that's so.—You're a queer fellow, Chester.'

'A queer fellow! I'm a villain—that's what I am. Come down the ladder again—please.'

Then John Chester showed the pitfall he had prepared for the other, confessed the reason of it, and said he would take the consequences of his crime, whatever they might be.

But Reuben merely laid his hand upon Chester's shoulder. 'I don't blame you,' he said quietly. 'We'll forget it, Chester, you and me, in time. There's no one else on earth whom it concerns.'

'Yes, there's Nancy. She'd never marry such a villain as me.—Oh, what a fearful thing this jealousy is!'

'You think she would not? Well, ask her, Chester.'

Nancy did not desert John Chester, though nothing of his tragic intention was withheld from her. It was, at any rate, a dreadful proof of his

love for her ; and when she looked into her heart after the confession, she found that she loved him no less than before, and pity was added to her love.

PRONOUNCING NAMES.

ENGLISHMEN are wont to demur at the inveterate habit of their Welsh neighbours of filling up Proper Names with legions of unnecessary consonants, thereby rendering the pronunciation of the same practically afeat of impossibility to any but a native of Cambria. However, after all that is said and done, Welshmen might retort with a certain degree of reason and justice by denouncing the way in which Englishmen of all classes deliberately sound many of their own names quite differently from the way in which they spell them ; and this perversion of ordinary rules applies equally to the pronunciation of both places and persons. This custom has in the majority of cases arisen either through the medium of local dialects, or else through a not unnatural desire for abbreviation. Of course, in the names of county families, several cases are well known, such as Levison being sounded as if spelt 'Luson ;' Wymondham, 'Wyndham ;' Cholmondeley, 'Chunley ;' Pennycomequick, 'Pennychuke ;' Dumaresq, 'Dumerrick ;' and Majoribanks, 'Marchbanks.'

However, it is not so much in family names, such as the foregoing, in which we delight to confuse foreigners, as in the names of towns and villages ; besides, these family names indulging in conjuring tricks are comparatively few in number, and everybody is supposed to be acquainted with their little weaknesses. Yet we who laugh at these apparent affectations in others, are nothing loth to commit the same crimes ourselves and to boldly pronounce names of familiar places in a way that is totally at variance with the spelling. To say 'libel' instead of label, or 'stroick' instead of strike, would be to acknowledge ourselves to be of Cockney origin ; nevertheless, all the world over, Thames becomes 'Tems.' We sound Greenwich as if it were spelt 'Grinige ;' whilst Woolwich correspondingly becomes 'Woolige ;' and then we pride ourselves upon speaking the Queen's English correctly ; although, perhaps, we really do speak grammatically, even in the face of these apparent blunders, for what is grammar but the official recognition of custom with regard to speech ? Yet in all this we give strong grounds for disciples of phonography to base their arguments upon.

There are numerous examples of this habit of mispronunciation to be encountered throughout the country, it being by no means indigenous to the metropolitan area. It is doubtless to save time and trouble that Cirencester is abbreviated into 'Ciester,' Willesden into 'Willsden,' Sydenham into 'Sydnam,' and Woolfardisworthy into 'Woolsery.' Brighthelmstone is a thing of the past, for when that little Sussex village expanded itself into the dimensions and dignity of a town, it equalised matters by contracting its name into 'Brighton.' But even when we meet with a short and seemingly simple name like Derby we must needs sound the 'e' as if it were an 'a,' and say

'Darby ;' nor is the reason apparent why the county of Shropshire should be sometimes converted into 'Salop,' nor Barnstaple into 'Barum.' For brevity's sake we write 'Wilts,' 'Yorks,' and 'Berks' instead of Wiltshire, Yorkshire, and Berkshire—which last named, by the way, following the before-mentioned lead of Derby, metamorphoses itself into 'Barkshire,' a fact which *Punch* wittily makes use of by referring to it as being the Parliamentary constituency of Toby, M.P. In a similar manner 'Harford' or 'Hartford' represents Hertford. Salisbury is pronounced 'Saulsberry ;' and that favourite termination for the name of a town, Burgh, is sounded as if written 'Buror,' thus expanding the word by a more inexplicable process than that by which Jack Tar calls a helm a 'hellum.'

Badgeworthy Water, a Devonshire stream figuring somewhat prominently in Mr Blackmore's romance *Lorna Doone*, is locally called 'Badgery Water ;' whilst in the neighbouring county of Somerset, an obscure little village with the rather ambiguous title of Bathealton is invariably known as 'Battleton ;' and Newport (Isle of Wight) becomes 'Nippit' in the language of Wessex.

Such changes are not altogether surprising in localities where traditional names are entrusted to the keeping of a semi-educated or ignorant peasantry ; but surely we are entitled to expect more care and consideration in the great centres of learning ? However, as a matter of fact we are disappointed in this respect, even in our Universities—at least as regards the names of colleges—for at Oxford we have Magdalen pronounced 'Maudlin ;' whilst at Cambridge, Caius becomes 'Keys.'

SONG OF AN OLD MAID.

WHAT can I offer you, oh my love,
After these lonely years—
Lips that have lost their sweetness,
Eyes that are heavy with tears ?—
A heart that is bitter and cold,
And overshadowed with fears ?—
I have nought to offer you, oh my love,
After these lonely years.

Oh Lips so white ! be red for my love,
And smile as in olden days !
Oh Heart of ice ! melt for him now,
In the light of the sunshine rays !
My lips shall sing and my heart shall ring
With the joy of my tender lays—
And you, oh my love, will kiss and caress,
As you did in the olden days.

No ; it is over : it is too late
To dream the old dream again.
I am weary of life with its fretful cares—
I am tired of the heart-breaking pain.
Is there no remedy ? Is there no rest,
No fleeing from ills that remain ?
No ! It is late—It is years too late
To dream the old dream again.

MAUD PHILP.

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